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ABSTRACT

This paper presents some thoughts on teaching listening and speaking skills in second language learning. Both teacher and student roles are discussed along with learning devices. Teacher and student share active and productive roles in the development of listening and speaking skills; the breadth of each of their roles encompass both self-analysis and attention to the activity of the other. (Author/VM)

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HEARING AND SPEAKING SKILLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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As you have noted from the program, we will be spending the two day workshop considering the more or less familiar language learning sequence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and finally the techniques and tools for evaluating the development of each of these skill areas. While all educators are concerned with these levels in the hierarchy of communication, we hope to concentrate on the how and why the skills on each of these levels are developed differently in the student learning English as a Second Language. We will consider those aspects,of both English and the student's native language, which limit communication. As theme setters, we hope to provide new or reviewed ideas, experiences, and suggestions which each of you may wish to further develop, discuss, or in some way tie in with your own experiences, during the subsequent group sessions. The goal is to help us leave with concrete ways of improving communication for our students, - with us, among themselves and most importantly, outside the class group in real communication situations. Too frequently we unconsciously neglect that final goal, and, in our zeal, fail to see beyond communication between the student and teacher, which is actually only partial communication, since it is achieved in more or less contrived situation.

Since predisposition is necessary to all learning, the skills will be considered in their logical order. However, it is important to

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keep in mind that although the sequence forms a hierarchy, one skill is not done with, when the next is being developed. For example, listening should continue to develop even as speaking, reading, and writing are being taught.

Mr. Sharp and I have worked together to survey problems and resources on the levels of listening and speaking and have been assisted by Mrs. Cooper of San Francisco State College, who, although she could not be with us today, has taped several most informative comments concerning the teaching and learning of listening and speaking skills. (Tape - brief presentation in African language.) I can assure you that Mrs. Cooper's message was most important. How each of us interpreted it is another matter. What exactly did she mean? Was she simply telling us something or was she posing a question for our consideration or response? Was her message pleasant or unpleasant? And how many words did she use to get her thought across? We listened and heard, but it is obvious that communication for many, if not all of us, was limited or totally absent. Why? Probably because the sentence structures, vocabulary, and sound patterns were unfamiliar. The suprasegmentals of intonation, pitch and stress were not patterned after those of English. And finally, we probably tuned out somewhere along the line, when it became apparent that communication was not going to improve. Actually, Mrs. Cooper was trying to teach us something. She failed as a teacher, and we therefore, failed as students. Communication was not achieved, since we did not control the necessary variables of structure,

vocabulary, and sound pattern to decipher the message, and she failed in not providing an opportunity to develop control of those variables.

I'm sure it is obvious why we invited Mrs. Cooper along. We can place ourselves in her position, both as teachers and students and analyze both the role of the teacher and student in the language learning process.

Since reading and writing are basically the graphic representation of what is heard and said, control of listening and speaking skills without graphic symbols is necessary before these levels are ever attempted. Therefore, we will first consider listening. If we agree that speech cannot be invented, only imitated, it is easy to understand why there is need to attend sufficiently to a model before being able to reproduce that model with any certainty. This is the listening or hearing stage in the language process. It seems to be the most neglected stage, probably because it is the least "productive" in concrete terms. Many label it the passive stage. However, listening should be active and participative both for the student and teacher. Effective listening involves both auditory discrimination and comprehension. I point out these two elements, since they can, to some degree, exist separately. We can discriminate without comprehending, although we cannot comprehend without discriminating. How and why both the teacher and student listen are different and important.

Since we aim to teach both effectively and efficiently, a knowledge of what in the English language most needs to be taught to

a particular student or group of students is particularly helpful in establishing a priority and sequence for planning. One source of such information is a contrastive analysis of English and the student's native language. Such a systematic comparison of languages can reveal certain structural differences in sound pattern, vocabulary and intonation, which may cause difficulties in learning English. Although such notables as Wardhaugh have recently attacked the contrastive analysis hypothesis on the basis that analysis cannot predict learning difficulties, I feel that we can be safe in using such information as a basis for possible, rather than probable, difficulties and as an indication of why certain difficulties are actually experienced by certain students. By considering contrastive analysis information in lesson planning, we can increase the rate by which our students gain useful experience. For example, the knowledge that the "sp" cluster in Spanish is preceded by "e" (as in e<u>v</u>ery) in the initial position, and that adjectives in Spanish generally follow the words they modify, may suggest that, since these elements exist differently in English, they should be consciously taught. Contrastive analysis is helpful in telling us the What, although not the How, of what should be taught.

While analyses exist for a variety of languages, we need not be limited by either their existence or absence. This is where the teacher as a listener comes in. A teacher who carefully and consciously attends to his students' speech, both in his native language and as he endeavors to learn English, can quickly discover many difficulties which warrant attention. Some of these

may indeed be due to a conflict between languages. However, others may not be conflict related at all, but may stem from inherent difficulties within the English language. For example, a student may confuse "too", "so", and "very", not as a result of interference from his native language, but simply as a result of intralingual difficulties within the English language itself. Only the teacher as a listener can discover such difficulties.

Listening may also uncover speech or hearing defects or nonstandard patterns which the student may have internalized through informal peer contact. Occassional or even systematic mixing of languages by the student both during and beyond of the formal language teaching situation may suggest that the environments in which these languages are used are too close. Concentrated listening on the part of the teacher in a bilingual teaching situation is of particular importance in this regard, since he may himself become too attuned to hearing several languages used in close proximity to notice the mixing. Student mixing of two languages may suggest to the teacher that he check his own rate of shift between languages and perhaps set up some artificial or situational separation of the two languages, so that the student will be able to place their existence in separate situations. This is particularly important for the young learner who has not yet developed a clear concept of what language is. The student who says "The bird is in the jaula" may have no idea that he has mixed two languages. The teacher-listener may also discover whether these errors occur haphazardly or in systematic fashion.

How does the teacher listen? He may do the listening first hand,

or may use either mechanical or live informants to do the listening for him. He may listen to what is said during a lesson or in an informal group, or he may use a tape recorder or more able student to report difficulties. For example, a tape recorder placed inconspicuously in a kindergarten play area or near an upper grade committee session will record language as it is actually being used, regardless of how or if it were taught.

The teacher's duty as a listener does not end with listening to his students. He should also carefully listen to himself for the following reasons: to adjust his voice to the room and group; to check to see if he is giving an appropriate language model in terms of natural rhythm, pace, and consistency; and to determine whether he is consciously removing himself more and more from the role of speaker, so that his students may become more independent in their role. The teacher should tape a regular class lesson in order to check his own language. This will provide a basis for comparison with previous and subsequent tapes in an effort to decrease the percentage of time during which he is talking and the students are listening, so that eventually the majority of talking time will be on the part of the students. After all, we know that the teacher can speak English; it's the student with whom we are concerned.

Finally, the teacher should be aware of the anticipation factor in listening. It is true that we often hear what we would like to hear, and not actually what has been spoken. For example, we may hear the inflectional markers of "t" and "d" for the past tense when the student has given only the simple present in response to

a cue. Generally when anticipation becomes a factor, the error itself is rather inconspicuous. However, this does not mean that the point should go unchecked. Comprehension, for the moment, may not have been greatly altered, but the error generally will become more apparent on the reading and writing levels. Therefore, the teacher should become aware of the anticipation factor. He may do this by checking what he thinks he has heard against what actually has been recorded on a tape or determined through collaboration with another teacher in a listening situation. A simple way of doing this is to have the student repeat a list of words or simple structures with both the teacher and collaborator marking the student on accuracy in response. If the results differ, it is obvious that the anticipation factor is effecting one or the other of the recorders.

The role of the student as a listener is tantamount to all levels of language learning. For the Beginner, listening is just about everything. For the Intermediate student it is essential, and for the Advanced student it is still valuable. In other words, although the methods for listening and the type of content listened to will vary with the proficiency of the student, the skill itself will continue to develop. If the student cannot discriminate between models on the hearing level, he will not be able to orally produce these differences. If he is not afforded the opportunity of responding in a non-verbal way before attempting oral response, it will be difficult to ascertain whether a spoken error is due to the fact that he actually did not correctly hear the model or whether he did hear the model correctly but reproduce

reproduce it orally. He must learn to hear without speaking.

Although both discrimination and comprehension should be present in any listening activity, at the very beginning levels, we may need to settle for simple discrimination. This will be particularly true if the student has not developed a commensurate level of comprehension in his native language. One way of evaluating listening skill is to present a minimal pair, (two words which are different in only one sound position) one item of which will present a possible problem to the student in pronunciation. He should be able to show in some way that he can hear the differences between the verbal cues given by the model. (Plate I). He may respond by raising a different number of fingers or different color cued cards for each picture, or by responding in some other physical but non-verbal way. The cue may be a single word, or brief sentences with or without contextual clues, depending on the degree of comprehension entering into the situation. For example, if comprehension is very limited, the statement "A ship is something that crosses the ocean", is no more meaningful than "I see a ship". Therefore, the cue should be limited to the level of comprehension, if comprehension is to be a deciding element in a correct choice. Another way of non-verbally checking listening is to make more or less complex requests which can be responded to in a non-verbal way.

By including sound and/or structural difficulties for a particular student, we can check whether or not he is attending to these difficulties and actually hearing. For example, you might ask a Chinese student to point to a picture showing the girl who ate the

cake. The picture choices should include a girl eating, one about to eat and another who has obviously eaten the cake. (Plate II) Since the concept of tense in Chinese and English is different, we are interested in seeing whether the student has attended to the difference in verb tense before making his selection. Of course, a listening selection for an advanced student would be quite different. For example, it might be a five or ten minute taped discussion involving more than a single individual, and its purpose might be to analyze the student's ability to discriminate between various ideas presented by different speakers. Distracting information might be included to determine if the listener is able to comprehend subtle differences in the value of information. Whether the cue is a simple minimal pair or a lengthy taped selection is dependent upon the student for whom it is planned. However, the intent of the cue remains basically the same: to further develop comprehension and discrimination on the listening level. Regardless of age or proficiency, all students can be involved in an appropriate activity of attentive listening.

In addition to listening activities for response, the student should also be afforded a variety of listening experiences simply for developing patterns of familiarity. Brief but frequent listening periods be scheduled, either using live models or mechanical devices, such as the tape recorder, record player, language master, radio, or television. Versality both in voice and content style are important in enabling the student to expand his listening skills. Speakers from various parts of the country with differences in dialect, and presentations in the form of prose, poetry,

dialogue and song will all aid in developing this versality. We should remember however, that listening at a conversational speed requires a great deal of facility and that memory and attention span in a second language are generally shorter in English than in the student's native language. We must, therefore, be careful not to make excessive demands on the student at this initial level.

Finally, just as in the case of the teacher, the student should consciously listen to himself. This level of listening combines with the student's productive ability. We often speak without actually attending to how we sound or to what we are saying. This is of course a necessary result of reaching the stage of language as habit. However, the student should at least initially attempt to hear himself as compared with a model. For example, the model may be "Where does his father work?" and the student may mimic "Where does da fadder work?" It is important for the student to listen to himself to determine if he actually can hear the difference between the cue and the response. If he can hear the difference, then the teacher's approach would involve extended activities for developing articulation accuracy. However, if he cannot hear any difference between cue and response, the approach would be completely different and involve additional listening activities which demand no verbal response.

Although listening skills continue to develop all through the language hierarchy, at some point the student will be asked to respond in a verbal way to what he has heard. The exact point at which this occurs is arbitrary. While we agree that the student should not be required to say what he has not heard, read what he has not

said, nor write what he cannot read, the gaps between each of these levels will depend on the student, his age, maturity and previous language experience and on the duration and purpose of the program. The period between listening and speaking for the pre-schooler may be several months, while the gap for an older student may be bridged within a single teaching period. Again, only the teacher as a listener can determine the correct procedure.

It is of course important that the student learn language by practice rather than explanation. The patterns or models which are provided for practice come in a rich variety of shapes and sizes. As during the listening stage, both the teacher and student have specific roles to fulfill. Although the student will be exposed to patterns in the informal setting around him, the teacher again can draw from contrastive analysis and analytic listening experiences to establish priorities for teaching. The teacher who is linguistically oriented and can understand the basic essentials of sound production will be best able to limit the difficulties for his students. For example, if the purpose of a particular model is to teach the present continuous with the contracted first person singular, the teacher should know why it is easier to say "I'm playing" than "I'm going". By using the first structure, which provides for movement between words at the same point of articulation, he has simplified the task for the student. At a later time he may, of course, wish to increase the level of difficulty by systematically introducing possible problem causing variables. Regardless of complexity, the teacher model should be consistent, frequent, and delivered at a natural pace.

This, of course, does not mean that the teacher may not use a variety of cues of techniques to clarify the model for the student. Slowing the pace, gesturing, using backward buildup, supplying a word which the student cannot recall, and using non-verbal cues will certainly help the student toward mastery. For example, the teacher may set up a series of symbolic cues to elicit particular responses without having to interrupt the student to insert verbal explanations of the type of response he desires. (Plate III). The point to remember, is that the final response on the part of the student should be natural. Oral drill is particularly important and useful because of its flexibility and adaptability. While the material in books is more or less static, the teacher can consider bother his teaching style and the student's level of interest, and can adjust the content of the oral drill to satisfy the particular situation. He can feed in useful information and change and modify the drill at any instant, an advantage not available in most other forms of instruction.

There are various ways for presenting language material. Of course the prime model should be the teacher. However, he may utilize substitutes in his place. A pattern may be modeled by another pupil or by the voice on a tape recorder, record player or language machine. It may model a general point for learning by all students or may be tailor made for a particular student. For example, language loops (Plate IV) can provide models for students requiring reinforcement on a particular point or for students who have entered the class after a particular point has already been taught. The loop provides both listening and speaking opportunity.

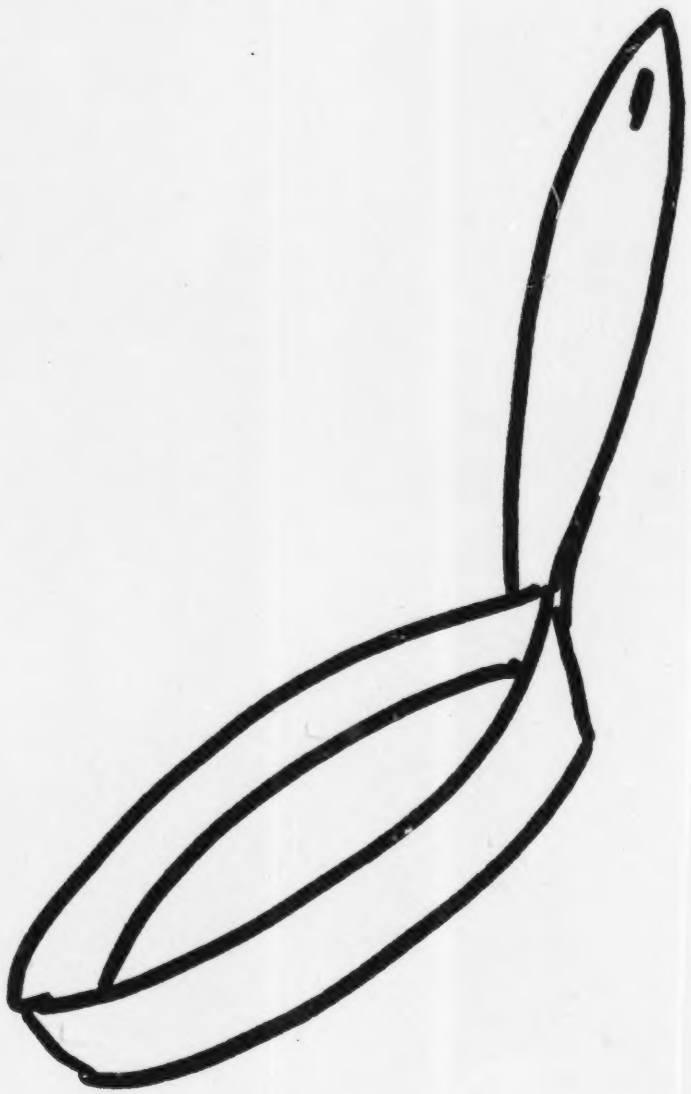
The model may also be presented in a variety of situations utilizing appropriate pictures, charts, flannel board presentations, puppet playlets, role plays, songs, poetry, and repetitive teacher-pupil narrations (Plate V). Regardless of how the drill is disguised, there should be provision for adequate pupil participation, and the teacher should be aware of the specific language outcome which is sought.

Even the most creative idea will be unproductive if the purpose becomes lost somewhere in the presentation. The model will also be ineffective if the student, for a variety of reasons, is unable to articulate it. When sufficient modeling has been unsuccessful it may be necessary for the teacher to provide additional assistance. A diagram of the speech organs or a sketch of the mouth position producing a particular sound may be helpful. We can also mirrors or tongue depressors to help the student become aware of the points of articulation for a particular sound. Dramatic paper pushing and blowing out of matches may also be useful (Plate VI). However, the teacher should remember only to resort to these artificial techniques when continued modeling has failed.

In conclusion, it should be apparent that the teacher and student share active and productive roles in the development of listening and speaking skills. The breadth of each of their roles encompasses both self analysis and attention to the activity of the other. Too frequently, the aspect of self analysis is omitted with the resultant weakening of learning. Only through conscious coordinated development of both aspects will optimum growth in teacher and student skill be possible.

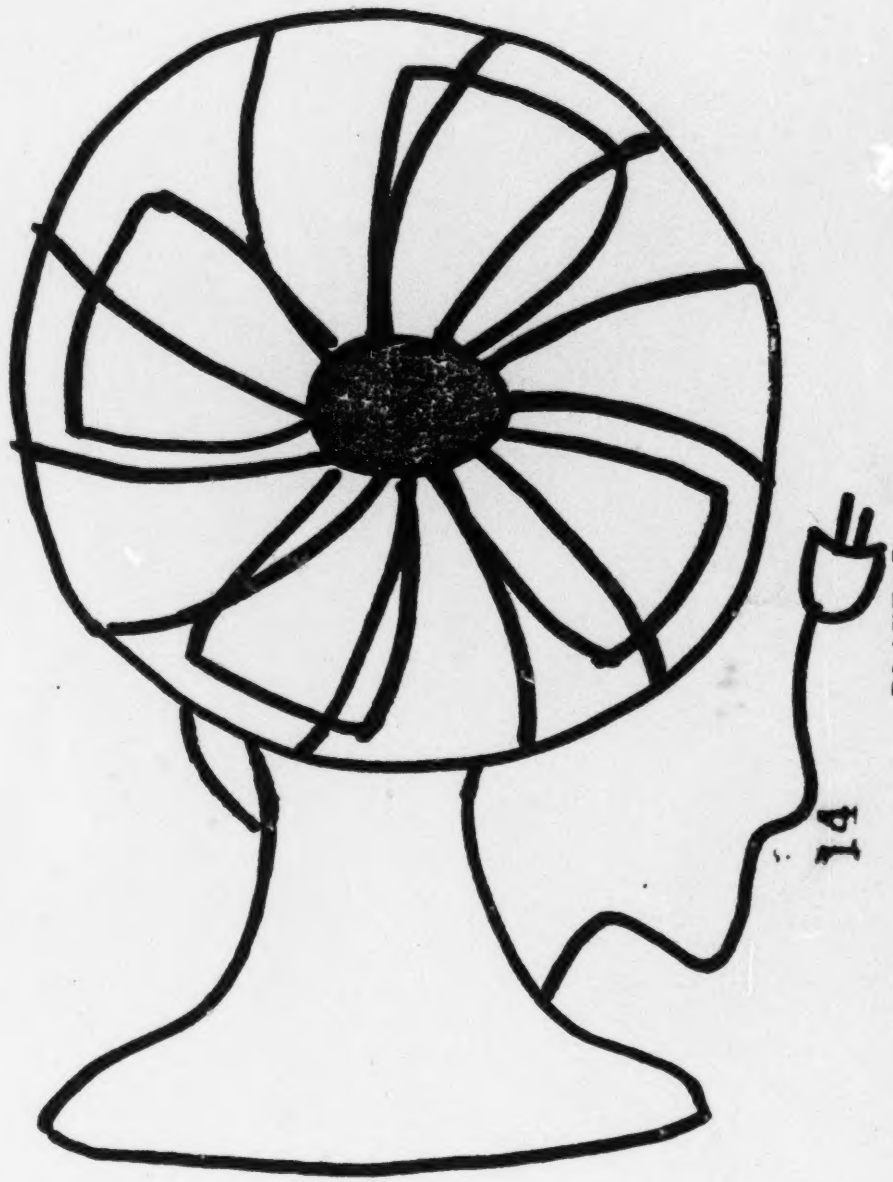
PRESENTED AT
1971 TESOL CONVENTION
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

1.



(PAN)

2.



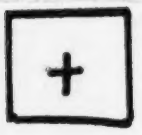
(FAN)

He is going to eat.

He is eating.

He ate.

CUE SYMBOLS



+	POSITIVE	I'M SINGING.
−	NEGATIVE	I'M NOT SINGING.
?	QUESTION	AM I SINGING?
←	PAST TENSE	I SANG.
→	FUTURE TENSE	I'M GOING TO SING.
← ?	PAST QUESTION	DID I SING?
→ ?	FUTURE QUESTION	AM I GOING TO SING?
← −	PAST NEGATIVE	I DIDN'T SING.
→ −	FUTURE NEGATIVE	I'M NOT GOING TO SING.

Practice Loops

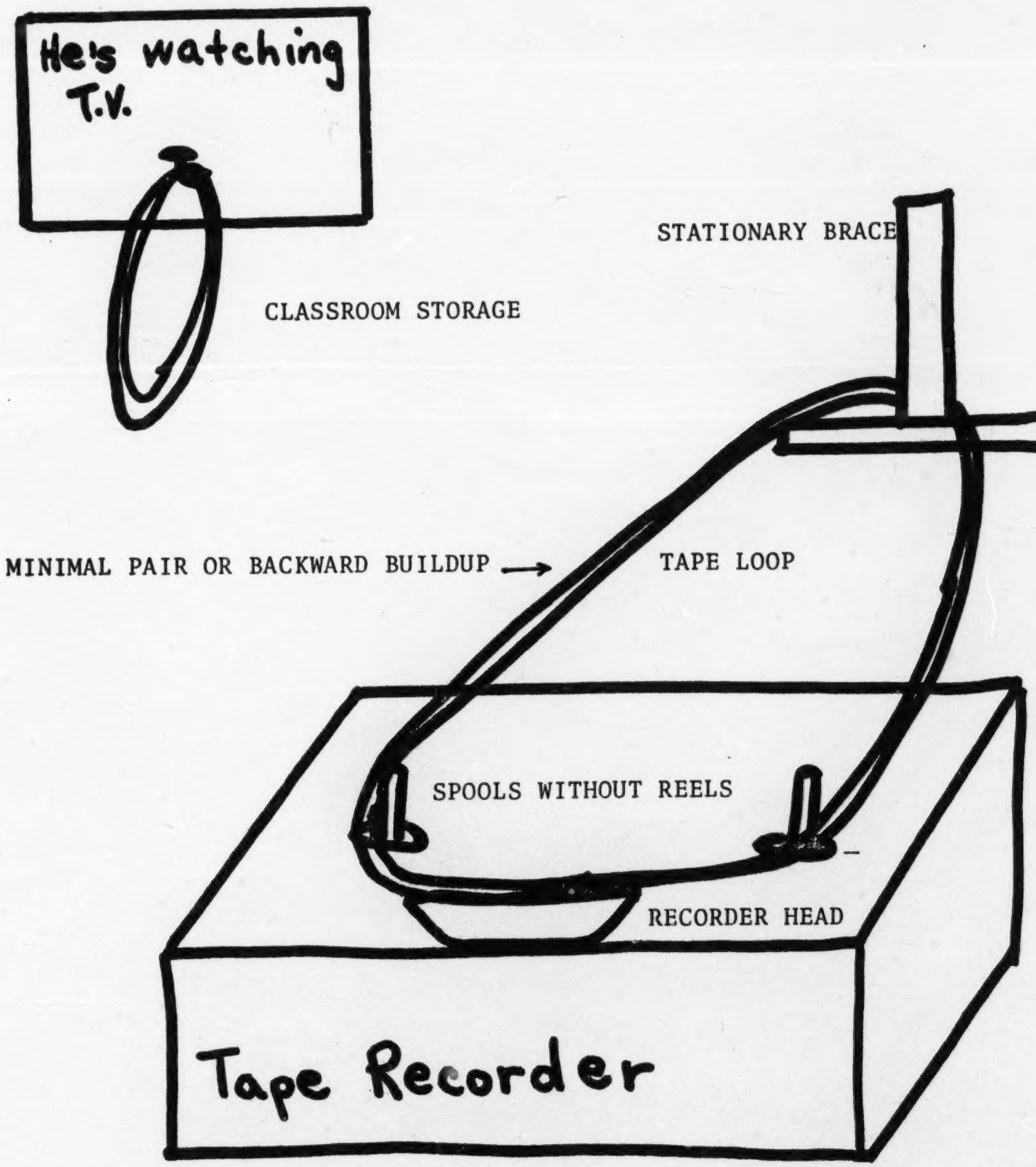
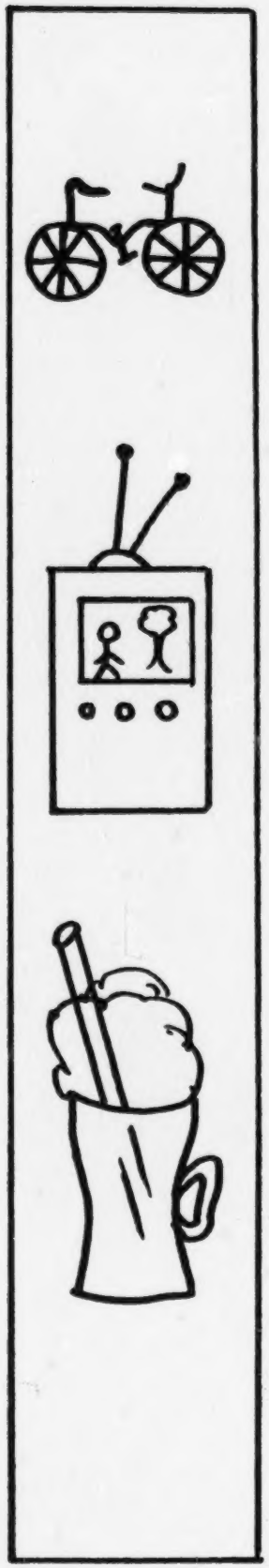
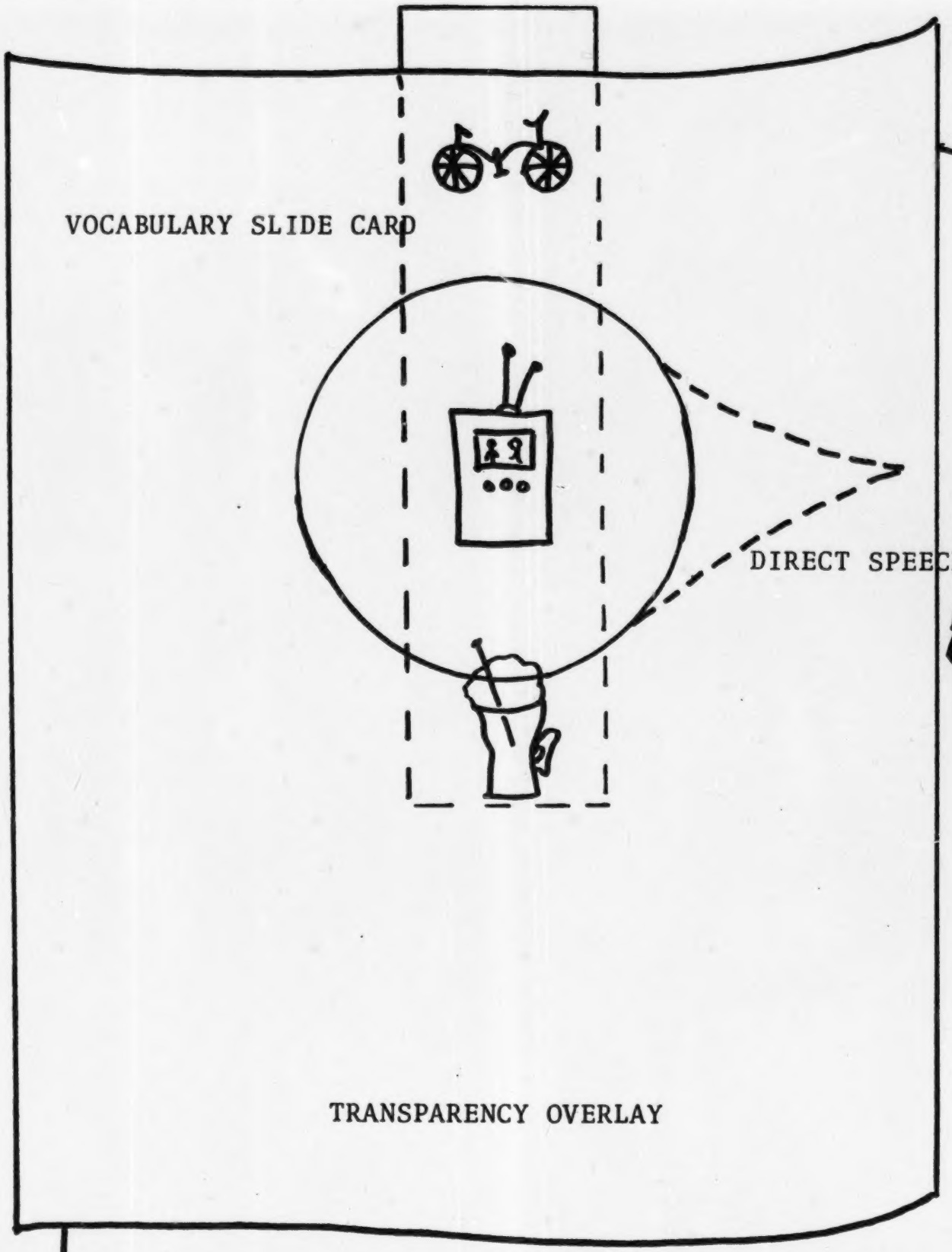


PLATE IV





TRANSPARENCY OVERLAY

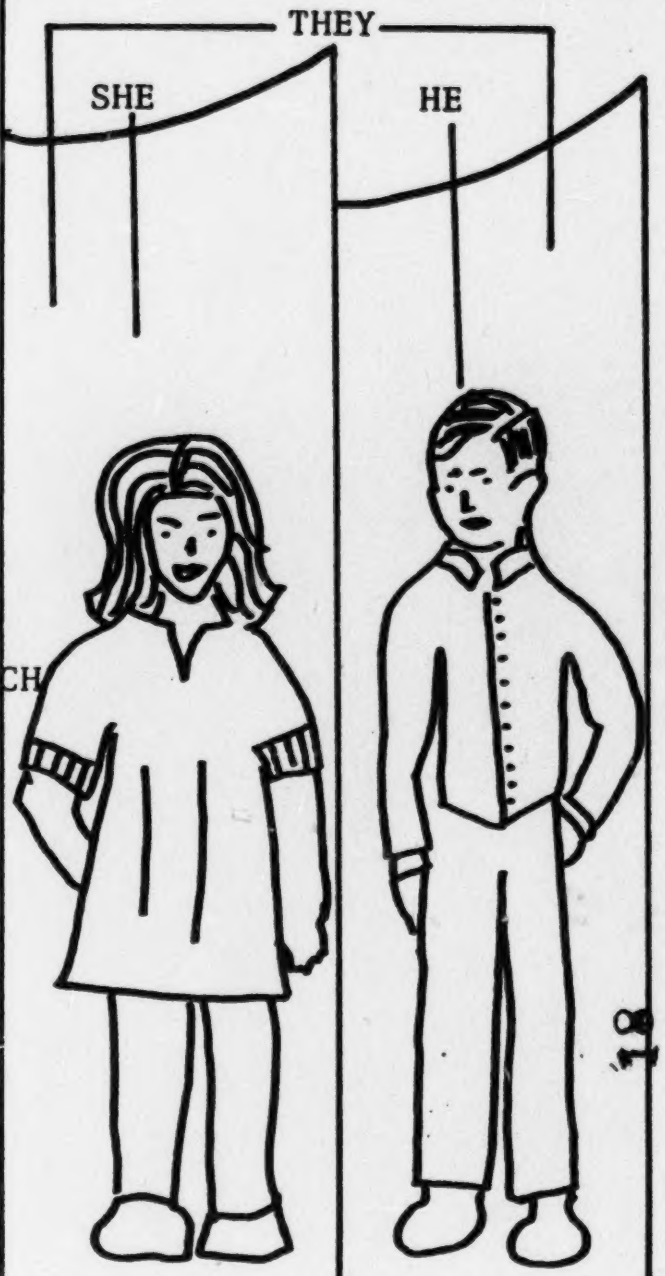
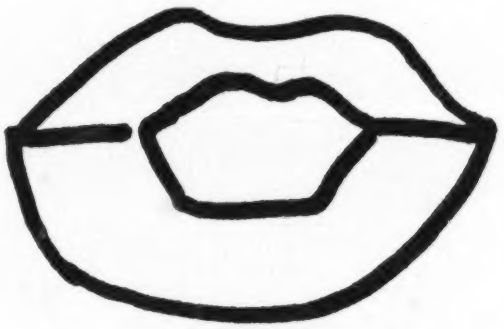


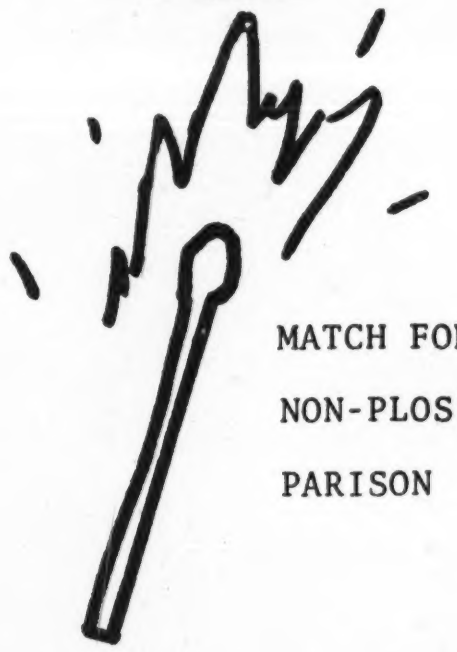
PLATE V

Articulation

DIAGRAM OF VOCAL ORGANS

SPECIFIC MOUTH POSITION CHART [o]

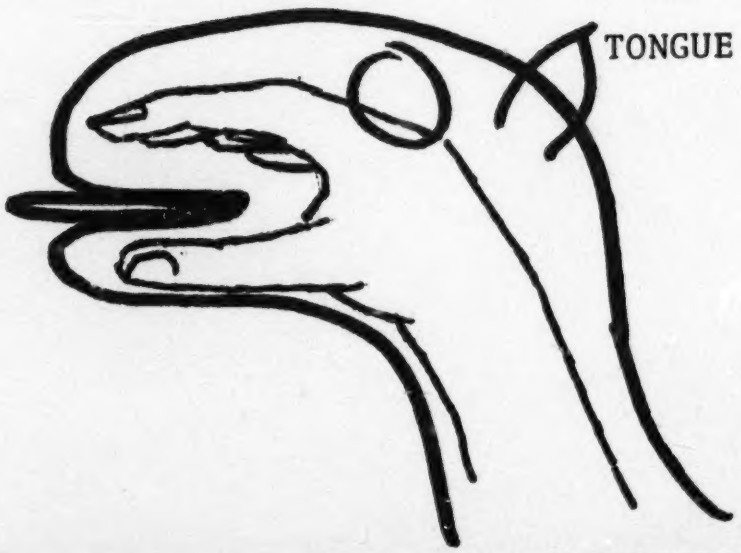


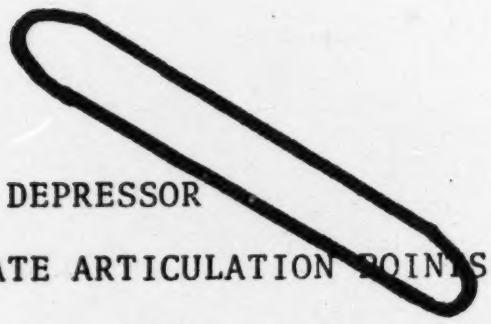


MATCH FOR PLOSIVE/ NON-PLOSIVE COMPARISON

MIRROR FOR MOUTH POSITION COMPARISON

HAND PUPPET WITH MOVABLE TONGUE





TONGUE DEPRESSOR TO LOCATE ARTICULATION POINTS

PLATE VI